2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
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CHAPTER IV

ECONOMIC ASPECTS

Labor

In the production of economic goods the man supplied the great bulk of raw materials by means of hunting, doing relatively little collecting and processing. He was responsible, however, for the supply and care of the major means of production, the horse. The chief objects manufactured by him were bows, arrows, clubs, shields, and ceremonial equipment.[1] The woman, on the other hand, supplied only a small part of the raw materials, through collecting, but did most of the processing of raw materials and manufacturing.

Cooperation within the household was necessary for production, and the household was practically a self-sufficient unit with relatively little reliance on the cooperative work of others. In actuality there was quite a bit of mutual help, especially among relatives. There was, of course, a certain amount of dependence of the man on his fellows in hunting in the sense that men usually hunted buffalo in groups and, in view of the common welfare, an individual was restrained from selfishly hunting alone and scattering the herd on which his fellows were depending. Nevertheless the operation was a collective rather than a truly cooperative one because, once the chase started, each man was on his own and had the right of disposal over whatever game he killed. It was stated that in any given run the most a man could kill would be seven or eight buffalo and that almost inevitably some would get none. No one went home empty-handed, however, for the more fortunate

[1] Maximilian noted in 1833 that men make only arms and smoking equipment (p. 103), and that among the Gros Ventres were many war clubs "made of the long end of an elk's horn" and "daggers" of jaws and teeth of a bear (p. 75). For other details of materials and manufacture, see Kroeber, 1908, pp. 150–51. For illustration of a shield, see photograph, courtesy of Richard Pohrt, pl. 3.

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repeated this stunt twice more, but this was too much for these old women, who then started fighting and shouting recriminations, blaming each other. The boys of course were in high glee as the old women hit each other and grunted. Finally, however, they called the daughter of one of the old women, saying: 'Come and see these old ones fighting. Try and stop them. They will kill each other.' So as the boys ran away, the younger woman restored peace."

Care of the aged devolved upon close kin. Whereas old men customarily lived directly with the households to which they were attached, old windows usually lived in lodges separate from, but located near, those of relatives who provided most of their food. To old women was often relegated the care of their grandchildren, especially of their granddaughters, whom they were supposed to train from the age of about seven until such time as they were given in marriage. The young girls in turn supplied the water and fuel for their grandmothers. In case the aged person had children of his own, he was reasonably secure. Those whose dependence was on more remote relatives were less assured of good care. The aged who had special skills which could be exercised in spite of debility, especially those who possessed "medicine power," were better off than the others.[1]

In dealing with old people it was said that much patience and forbearance were often necessary. For instance, one old woman, now deceased, was described by a relative in the following terms: "She was a hardboiled old jane, rough and tough, who didn't hesitate to tell you what she thought of things. But she had many friends and when visitors came she would swell up and be proud when they sat beside her rather than beside one of the several other old women who lived in the same place. Usually during the visit, however, she would get mad and threaten all kinds of things, and people would have to humor her. One day she really blew up and said: 'I'm going to save my relatives the job of hauling my carcass out, so I'm going out on the hills right now and lie out there and die!' So one of her relatives had to pretend to take her

[1] Denig, pp. 576–77, states that only such old persons who possess medicine powers are exempt from the petty tricks and other annoyances to which the aged in general are subject among northern plains tribes.